

# Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

VOLUME XXI

ASHLAND, O., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 1899

No. 23

## An Apostolic Ministry

That we may form some idea as to what we ought to understand when we speak of an apostolic ministry, let us glance for a moment at some of its boldest outlines. On the one hand we see a world sunk in desperate wickedness. A universal mythology, as corrupt in ethics as it was false in conception, ruled the minds of men, and distinctly performed the office of non-religion, by crushing out every aspiration toward a higher life. All the impulses of the old idolatries ministered to appetite, and that alone. Mind and soul and heart were bestialized, and men became more abominable and more ferocious than wild beasts. Built upon this permeating system of false ethics arose the stupendous political tyrannies. War and murder and spoil were the only honorable enterprises. The productive arts were the work of slaves, and were chiefly useful in providing fresh spoils for perpetual robberies. A reader of the ancient histories wonders how the ages of oppression endured without depopulating the planet. This picture forms the background of the apostolic ministry. It was into such a world that twelve unlettered men were sent, devoid of genius, or wealth, or influence, or any of the recognized elements of worldly success. These twelve men were commissioned to revolutionize that world. They were to overturn its mythologies, its temples, its traditions, its tyrannies. They were to cleanse the overflowing corruption, armed only with a tremendous fact—the resurrection—and with glorious faith—eternal life—they set forth the logic of that fact and the ethics of that faith, and these were the levers which overturned the world. "Seeing then that we have these promises—this hope, this destiny,—what manner of men ought we to be?"

What manner of men. That was the gospel, finding its concrete expression in the character of a MAN whom they had seen, who had walked among them as no other man had ever walked, who in his own person had gained the first victory over that world, and over the god of that world. The new man must be like Him. The man who would leap beyond time into the splendid eternities, who would smile at the impotence of death, and convert the dark grave into a portal of light and life,—the man who multiplying in the world as the centuries flowed on would redeem it from ignorance, and corruption, and poverty, and sickness, and cruelty, and pain, and every other woe; the man who in the splendor of his powers would rise in the coming dispensations to be the emperor of stars and suns, who would tread the courts of light in familiar conversation

with archangels, the equal of the highest among them, such was the gospel preached by these twelve simple men, the gospel of a *man*, but so resplendent, so glorious, so pregnant with destiny, so large in the magnificent scheme of the eternal future, that there was no other theme left by the side of it worthy of a moment's thought.

Now what did these twelve men do? What was the manner of their ministry? Let us follow them in our thought thru the first years of their evangel. It is difficult to keep pace with them. They are here, and yonder, and far away, preaching, preaching, preaching the good news, the news of a MAN whom God had made and God redeemed. The news of a MAN who vanquished Death. Looking at them across the wide vista of ages, these twelve appear not so much like men as like torches, flashing hither and thither, and setting the world on fire. They are everywhere. To evangelize a nation is but a morning's task. Jerusalem and Judea is quickly too small for them. Behold the contrast. A half dozen villages that you may see all at once from some central hiltop is a world quite large enough for twelve successors of these first twelve. The world was their parish, and history or tradition records their labors and their martyrdom in the widely separated four quarters. Where they labored with marvelous power, revolutions following and new dispensations springing, today a hundred thousand barely hold the strongest fortifications against an exulting foe. These hundred thousand are not so mighty as the twelve. Why? It is perhaps because these twelve were more nearly like the ONE whom they preached. Twelve MEN, patterns of the one MAN. The likeness in the hundred is feeble. One is anxious for his slowly arriving salary, another has his farm, another his comfortable parsonage with its soft couches, another his literary tastes, another his small ambitions, and so on and on down the long ranks of the "successors." A hundred thousand infants, and not a man among them. In a race of Liliputians, one standing ten inches high would be esteemed a giant, and so there may appear to us to be a man here and there, and even a "great man," but where will we find one who is equal to the task of "turning the world upside down," or twelve, or a hundred, or a thousand?

They were not larger in stature than we, or possessed more physical endurance, or intellectual vigor, but for all that they were men so dynamic in spiritual force, so large in power, that the world seemed too small for them. So like the one MAN whom they had seen,